

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /132 W

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R 312121Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5578

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4088

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: ATTACKS ON BILATERAL TALKS WITH SALVADOR

SUMMARY: FOR SEVERAL WEEKS "OUTS" OF DIFFERENT PERSUASIONS HAVE MOUNTED HARSH CAMPAIGN AGAINST SALVADORAN/HONDURAN TALKS. GOH IS VIRTUALLY CHARGED WITH BETRAYAL OF NATIONAL INTERESTS. FONMIN BATRES IS TRYING TO ORIENT RESPONSIBLE OPINION FAVORABLY, BUT GETS NO HELP FROM OTHER ELEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. UPON HIS RETURN FROM MEXICO, FONMIN BATRES DISCOVERED THAT GOH WAS HAVING HEAVY GOING WITH BAD PUBLICITY ON THE HONDURAN/SALVADORAN TALKS. AS USUAL, GOH WAS DOING NOTHING ABOUT IT.

2. ATTACKS ON GOH HAVE CENTERED ON GENERAL LOPEZ' LAST MEETING WITH ARANA AND MOLINA, AND ON THE TALKS IN MEXICO. LOCAL PRESS CONTINUES TO CRITICIZE LOPEZ FOR SAYING NOTHING ABOUT THIS MEETING, WHICH FIRST BECAME KNOWN FROM SALVADORAN ANNOUNCEMENT. SITUATION IS TYPICAL
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OF LOPEZ, WHO HIMSELF CREATES PROBLEMS AND SPECULATIONS

BY HIS DISREGARD OF ANY INFORMATION POLICY.

3. CRITICISM OF TALKS HAS BEEN NASTIER AND MORE "SPECIFIC." GENERAL LINE IS THAT BATRES IS SECRETLY PREPARING SELLOUT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS. SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, LIBERAL PARTY HAS NOW TAKEN LEAD IN WILD ALLEGATIONS, E.G. IN PARTY'S "WEEKLY LETTER" FOR WEEK OF OCTOBER 15-19, WHICH SAYS THAT HONDURAN DELEGATES HAVE "ORDERS FROM GREAT PROMPTER" (I.E. USG) TO YIELD ON ALL HONDURAN CLAIMS AND ESPECIALLY TO CEDE TERRITORY. AS RESULT HONDURAS WILL ALLEGEDLY OPEN BORDER TO SALVADORANS, WHO WILL TAKE JOBS FROM HONDURAN LABOR, AND SEND VOTERS "TO IMPOSE MAYORS, CONGRESSMEN, PRESIDENTS AND CHIEFS OF STATE" ON HONDURAS. EVEN LAW OF ARMED FORCES WILL BE CHANGED TO ADMIT SALVADORAN OFFICERS. LIBERAL CENTRAL EXECUTIVE SUBSEQUENTLY SAID IT DID NOT IDENTIFY ITSELF WITH ARTICLE, BUT LIBERALS ARE GENERALLY AT PAINS TO DISCREDIT NEGOTIATIONS. CARLOS ROBERTO REINA'S NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING UNINFORMED CLAIM THAT TALKS ARE AT IMPASSE, MUST BE SEEN IN THIS LIGHT (EMBTel 4036).

4. BATRES CORRECTLY PERCEIVED THIS AS ATTACK NOT ONLY ON HIS INTEGRITY AND THAT OF NEGOTIATIONS, BUT ON GOH AS WHOLE. NECESSITY OF SECRECY IN NEGOTIATIONS, OF COURSE, SEVERELY LIMITS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSSIBILITIES, BUT HE HAS BEGUN TO GIVE BEHIND SCENES BRIEFINGS TO PRESS AND OTHER NATIONAL GROUPS AND LEADERS, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE RECEPTIVITY TO NEGOTIATIONS. WHATEVER THE DETAILS, BRIEFINGS SEEM TO BE POSITIVE, REFLECTING ASSESSMENT GIVEN US BY BATRES AND JORGE FIDEL DURON. BUSINESS SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THEY THINK BATRES IS MAKING PERSUASIVE CASE, AND BOTH LA PRENSA AND EVEN CRONISTA MAY BE REFLECTING THIS IN FAVORABLE EDITORIALS LAST TWO DAYS.

5. WE EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT XENOPHOBIC AND PARTISAN CRITICISM OF MEXICAN TALKS WILL CONTINUE. ALTHOUGH ATTACKS HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH MERITS OF CASE, THEY VENT FRUSTRATIONS OF POLITICAL OUTS. UNFORTUNATELY THEY ARE HAVING CONSIDERABLE IMPACT ON NAIVE PUBLIC OPINION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, BOUNDARY CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973TEGUCI04088
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS SANCHEZ
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973101/aaaaaaie.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jan-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <12 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ATTACKS ON BILATERAL TALKS WITH SALVADOR SUMMARY: FOR SEVERAL WEEKS "OUTS" OF DIFFERENT PERSUASIONS
TAGS: PFOR, ES, HO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005